

## NEWSLETTER TO MEMBERS

December 2008

As 2008 draws to a close your AAAC Executive takes the opportunity to report on major happenings over the last six months. The events run in Orange, Echuca, Toowoomba, Launceston and Adelaide were well attended and feedback very helpful in defining the program for 2009. Members report that the workshops and events are important components of their professional development to better provide client services. Plans are in place for five workshops in 2009 in addition to a 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration in Canberra in autumn.

### Members Surveys

The difficulties experienced by AIAST in mid year led AAAC to ask its members via email about their intentions if AIAST failed to survive. Responses indicated a majority view that AAAC should continue if AIAST failed. Members were somewhat ambiguous about the capacity of NO to provide administrative services to AAAC. These matters were discussed at the AAAC AGM in Echuca in May.

AAAC Executive followed up the first survey with a more comprehensive email survey in September. The findings of the survey which yielded 102 responses (about 46% of AAAC membership) were as follows:

**OPTION 1.** AAAC remains a subsidiary of AIAST, with similar State Division rights and responsibilities, including Board representation. A member would have to be an AIAST member in the first instance. AAAC would manage its own Secretariat. – **supported by 20.8% of responses.**

**OPTION 2.** AAAC becomes a stand-alone professional organization, paying an affiliation fee exclusive to AIAST for agricultural

representation and similar negotiated service provisions, but managing its own Secretariat. A member would NOT have to be an AIAST member in the first instance. AAAC would seek AIAST Board representation, that person being a member of AAAC/AIAST. –

**supported by 71.6% of responses**

**OPTION 3.** AAAC remains a subsidiary of AIAST, with current status quo, with National Office providing secretarial and other administrative services to AAAC Executive and its members. – **supported by 7.8% of responses.**

It was also interesting that a majority of those AAAC members who paid AIAST the \$100 Voluntary levy also thought that AAAC should be an organisation independent of AIAST. This indicates a recognition that both bodies are worthy of support but will be more effective if separate entities.

### Proposal to AIAST Board

Following the survey's completion, a proposal was forwarded to the AIAST Board meeting in late October. The proposal outlined AAAC's concerns with the AIAST-AAAC relationship with reference to historical and administrative baggage carried over in addition to a recognition that the goals and aspirations of the two bodies differ quite markedly. Issues identified included the following:

- A strong feeling of loyalty towards AAAC and a feeling that AAAC should "manage its own show", that its "grown up" enough to be allowed to do so
- There is some antipathy towards paying an AIAST subscription if a person wants to join AAAC – when applicants find out that they are up for \$350 to join an organisation which they may or may not

be interested in plus \$50 for the AAAC sub, this is a membership turn-off for some applicants

- AAAC wants to provide a professional and commercial advantage from membership. AAAC members are concerned about their professional association and what it can do for their consulting skills and expertise, how can it help them to better serve their clients and make their consulting businesses more profitable and sustainable
- AAAC is first and foremost the home of consultants of all shapes and sizes – agronomic, farm management, financial, marketing, economic, environmental, R&D, animal husbandry, horticulture, lifestyle, equine, change management, succession planning and so on. The AgCredited data indicates that there are hundreds of consultants and advisers in private, corporate and other locations who are potentially AAAC members who may not be interested in AIAST membership
- AAAC members are front and centre commercial operators dealing with a range of clients. This provides government with a good linkage and potential feedback for practical issues in the field
- An independent AAAC may be able to establish stronger bonds with AAAC WA Inc, to the professional advantage of both groups and their clients.

The AIAST October Board meeting was attended by AAAC President Bob Hudson and AIAST President Geoff Thomas attended the AAAC Executive meeting in Adelaide in November. Following that meeting AAAC put a further proposal to the AIAST November Board

for its consideration. The principal issues were :

- AAAC Executive proposed that AAAC establish a separate secretariat to service the needs of AAAC members. AAAC is developing a specification for its own secretariat and AAAC is also in the process of developing budget estimates for operating its own secretariat and is canvassing potential service providers from within the organisation's ranks
- It is proposed that AAAC have its own bank account
- AAAC proposed it operate its own website – the website will be [www.agconsultants.com.au](http://www.agconsultants.com.au) and will be directly linked to the AAAC Register and have a link to the AIAST website
- For the 2009 Membership notices to go out in December 2008, AAAC made the following recommendations :
- That the AAAC sub be increased to \$100 to cover expenses including additional Register/Website costs in establishment and operation
- That a combined billing for AAAC members go out on AAAC letterhead showing an annual sub of \$470 for AAAC membership and including AIAST membership
- All AAAC members will be eligible to have their details on the Register at no additional cost so that prospective clients can access a wider range of specialists

- AAAC wishes to maintain its independence in planning and running its own events, similarly AAAC wishes to maintain its capacity to raise funds by sponsorship at a local to national level. There would be communication with NO/Board regarding proposed programs.

At end November and subsequently the AIAST Board responded positively to the AAAC proposals as follows :

- **Secretariat Development**  
AAAC to develop TOR for a the separately operated secretariat
- **AAAC Subscription**  
A combined sub of \$480 given that the Board has approved an increase in the AIAST sub to \$380.
- **Website**  
AAAC to have its own website separate from but providing a link to AIAST.
- **Register**  
The Board agrees that AAAC should manage the Consultant Register.
- **Separate bank account**  
The Board agrees to open an AIAST – AAAC Working a/c with cheque book access
- **Events and Sponsorship**  
AAAC to continue to run events independently as it does now and to arrange sponsorship.

#### **Ongoing Negotiations with AIAST**

AAAC continues to negotiate with AIAST on several other matters which impact on AAAC's autonomy and capacity to operate an independent secretariat with website and register.

The next 6 months will be critical in determining 'where to' for AAAC. We ask that members to talk to their nearest Executive member about their needs and views about the organization they want in the future. AAAC needs to grow and prosper while it services the needs of its members – the quality and value of member benefits will determine the organisation's future.

There is a recognition within AIAST that for the two organizations to prosper, each must be able to forge its own destiny utilizing complementarity where possible to gain the greatest advantages along the way. AAAC looks forward to advancing its own prosperity based on member benefits, professional credibility and value for money.

The Executive sends Festive Seasons greetings to members and their families – we look forward to seeing you at events over the next 12 months.

Best Wishes

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